

King County Agriculture Commission

December 9, 2005

Issaquah Fish Hatchery

Issaquah, WA

Commissioners Present: Nancy Hutto, Bob Tidball, Roger Calhoon, Ben Kodama, Michaelae Blakely, Grant Davidson, Ewing Stringfellow, George Irwin, Dick Gradwold

Commissioners Absent: Judy Duff

Staff: Judy Herring, Steve Evans, Claire Dyckman (KC) Dept. of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) Agriculture Programs.

Guest Agency Staff: Geoff Reed, Co-Director, King Conservation District (KCD); Todd Murray, WSU Extension Program;

Guests: Bert Loosmore, Jeff McMorris

Commission Round Table:

Roger reported how he tracks each crop for success; Michaelae reported that SnoValley Tilth is gearing up for another set of winter/spring workshops, the Carnation Market; and possibly to establish a biodiesel cooperative; Nancy said Christmas sales, mail orders, the Victorian Fair, the Pike Place Market were all underway; and Ewing and George reported on the Cattlemen's Association annual conference in Chelan, attended by several hundred cattlemen. They noted that a major discussion was on how to identify carcasses; and that other Agriculture interests wanted their counties to model what King County has for agriculture in the Critical Areas Ordinance.

Staff Reports: Judy Herring, WLRD Agriculture program, reported:

- 27,000 plants were being installed in riparian areas in Mullen Slough area - by the Agricultural Drainage Assistance Program
- The 06 budget funded the Agriculture Cost Share program at the same level as in '05:
- The 06 budget passed by Council included funds to purchase the Flowers property in the Lower Green APD, a former nursery. However, the source of the funding was not named, and staff will have to keep the Commission apprised of the status of the project.

Steve Evans, WLRD Agriculture program, reported:

- The '06 budget allocated \$200,000 to Puget Sound Fresh instead of the \$55,000 that had been proposed. Commissioners will be able to advise the County on the use of these funds.
- Steve will set up a meeting with all farmer's market managers in January to discuss how the markets can work together to address the issues that confront them.

Geoff Reed, King Conservation District (KCD), reported:

- The KCD Assessment was passed at Council with the Council's formula for allocating the funds, which is not what the KCD had proposed. The KCD Board

of Supervisors would be meeting to discuss how to proceed. They are being put in a very difficult situation.

Todd Murray, Washington State University (WSU) King County Extension reported:

- The Washington State Horticultural Association will hold its annual conference on June 4th and 5th, 2006
- There will be hands on cheese making workshop on January 24th and 25th.
- WSU's Small Farms project is conducting a workshop for the Hmong farmers called "Make More Money at the Market" on December 18th..
- There is a new rust that affects blackberries but might damage some commercial Rubus crops. Information is on the WSU Whatcom website.

Presentation on KCD. Geoff Reed presented the mission, mandates, and programs of the 50 year old King Conservation District. This was done for several reasons, one of which is to help Commission members get back to the WLRD director on issues of potential gaps and overlaps among KCD, WSU Extension, and the County Agriculture programs. Geoff gave an in depth presentation, available from the KCD. His overview included:

- The KCD delivers federal farm assistance funds to local landowners through a variety of programs.
- Farm Plans deliver technical assistance, federal and local, to landowners as a good faith agreement that the landowner will work towards conservation goals. Once a farm plan is written, the landowner is considered a cooperator, and the KCD will run interference for the landowner on a multitude of issues.
- In Geoff's view: WSU Extension teaches one how to farm; KCD teaches one how to conserve resources using best management practices.

Public Comment:

Scott Stringfellow presented the situation of the Stringfellow family farm and asked the Commission for its help. King County Roads needs 4 acres of the farm for the new Mid-Fork Snoqualmie Bridge. These 4 acres are where the family has had a Christmas tree enterprise run by several generations of youth. Rather than receive monetary compensation for the 4 acres, the family would like to work with the County to acquire 4 acres adjacent to their farm in order to continue this enterprise.

Commission Business:

Motion: Bob Tidball moved, and Grant Davidson seconded, that the Commission write a letter to the Executive and Council to remind them that the Commission has passed a motion urging the County to find ways to preserve the net acres of farmland throughout the County when it is necessary to acquire farmland acreage for County projects; and that this was an example of how the County might seek creative options. Ewing Stringfellow excused himself. Discussion ensued. Councilmember Lambert's staff indicated that they were trying to assist the Stringfellow's, and a letter of support would help underscore the issue. The motion passed. Nancy Hutto, Chair, will write a letter to the Executive, Council, Bob Burns of DNR, and Linda Dougherty of King County Roads.

Heads-up: George Irwin gave the Commission a heads up on the issue of transferring the County Fairgrounds to the City of Enumclaw, and that there is a proposal to turn it into an equestrian centre. Staff need to keep the Commission apprised on this issue.

The Commission conducted a brainstorming session on three items:

- Documentation/Communication of Commission Accomplishments:
This discussion included underscored the need for follow-up on the results of Commission correspondence on various policies, projects, and the situation of individual landowners: is the Commission having an effect?
- Commission Work Priorities for the next year:
This discussion emphasized providing more visibility and exposure for the Commission and its activities, including working with urban Council members; more aggressive promotion of the value of agriculture; implementation of items in the Rural Economic Agenda; addressing and securing water for farms, and providing more support to individual landowners, including helping them in arbitration with their neighbors. The list of specific actions that were recommended to meet these objectives will be expanded and refined at the January meeting, where the Commission will finalize its overall '06 work plan will set the priorities.
- Commission Operations:
This discussion included diversifying the board through the new recruitment; better use of Commission and subcommittees; and working with County departments to avoid last minute communications between the Commission and the County on crucial projects that affect agriculture.

Nancy Hutto adjourned at 7 PM.

Public Comment

Maxine Keesling read published articles on the "Sammamish Valley Land Swap" reiterating her concerns on changing the Rural zoning in that APD to Agriculture zoning, and noting the irony of zoning ballfields to Agriculture while precluding soccer. She also reiterated her concerns that open space and conservation often take precedence over agriculture on agricultural lands, using an Oregon article and an example in the Palouse to make her points. (see attachments)

Commission Business

Because there was no quorum, voting on the offices of the Commission was postponed until the Dec 8 Meeting.

Those present decided to set up a subcommittee to respond to the questions posed to the Commission by WLRD Director, Mark Isaacson. Bob Tidball, Judy Duff, Nancy Hutto, and Roger Calhoun volunteered.

Suggested for the December 8 Meeting: update on Hwy 164 proposal, a process to formulate new covenants for the FPP program, and a discussion of creative options for holding the county to reducing the net loss of farmland of outside the APD.

Judy Duff moved to adjourn the meeting.